

# International Degree Mobility in Library and Information Science

*Vera Hillebrand, Elke Greifeneder*

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany  
vera.hillebrand@hu-berlin.de, greifeneder@ibi.hu-berlin.de

## Abstract

This study explores patterns of the geographical mobility for researchers in Library and Information Science and shows that there are clear patterns towards the United States in particular, and more general to countries offering an English language education.

**Keywords:** degree mobility; education; LIS; lingua franca

## 1 Introduction and method

This study explores patterns of the geographical mobility for researchers in Library and Information Science (LIS) – a field where the major publication venues require proficient English language skills. The study is based on a dataset of 877 active LIS researchers who have been involved in the 2014 to 2016 iConferences. The dataset has been originally collected for Bogers & Greifeneder (2016) who studied the review process and the community of attendees and reviewers of the iConference. The dataset has been augmented by collecting manually additional demographic information on authors and reviewers: gender, if the PhD was completed, the doctoral granting university, the country and continent where the PhD was completed, the country and continent of the Master's degree and country and continent of origin.

In: M. Gäde/V. Trkulja/V. Petras (Eds.): Everything Changes, Everything Stays the Same? Understanding Information Spaces. Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Information Science (ISI 2017), Berlin, 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Glückstadt: Verlag Werner Hülsbusch, pp. 371–373.

## 2 Results

The results of the study on geographical mobility patterns reveal alarming trends: 91.7% of all American researchers in the sample never left their home country to study or live abroad. International experience means getting to know more research communities, education styles and experiencing personal development through other languages and cultures. Of the 26 American researchers who moved away only six are today staying in a non-English-speaking country. On the other hand, researchers from Asia and Europe show a high rate of mobility towards North America. For Asia in particular women decided to leave the continent: 86.8% of all Asian females have left their country to receive an English degree in North America. More alarming, only 3.4% of all Asian researchers who have left their country at one point currently live in a non-English speaking country. Researchers born in Europe – if they have not left to stay in North America – are circulating on the continent itself with a preference for English speaking areas. Again 76.1% of all European researchers never left their home country. Middle East, Africa and Australia as minorities in the iSchools group are also losing active researchers to the United States. 41 of 43 researchers who left their country currently live in an English-speaking country and not one of all 43 researchers earned a degree in a non-English-speaking European country. The study on mobility in LIS shows very clearly that a majority of the next generation of LIS researchers receives an education in North America. 94.3% of all PhD students in the sample currently live in the US and may never return. One important pull factor seems to be the possibility of studying in English. If foreign students decide to come to Europe, they go to Ireland or the United Kingdom. Offering more degrees in English may be an important survival factor for European and Asian LIS schools.

## 3 Limitations

The results of this study are limited by the sample of active members of an international conference: in consequence the sample may contain more researchers who are willing to move to another country than if collected at a national conference in any of the European or Asian countries. On the other hand, the

sample includes those researchers who have come to play a role on the international level and as such it matters if they have a high or a low mobility index: having lived in another country or having an English speaking LIS education may be one of the core determinants of being a successful researcher in this field.

## References

- Bogers, T. and E. Greifeneder (2016): The iSchool Community: A Case Study of iConference Reviews. In: *iConference Proceedings*. <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/89312>